A LETTER

Written
Out of the Countrey to a Friend
IN
LONDON
Concerning
EASTER-DAY.

LONDON,
Printed for *Timothy Garthwait* at the Kings-head
in St. *Pauls* Church-yard, 1664.

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LETTER...
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SIR,

YOur Letter tells me, that you have met with very many men that ſay, *We ought to keep Eaſter, this year, upon* APRIL *3. though all our Engliſh Almanack-makers have placed it upon* APRIL 10. Yet you cannot be of that opinion, becauſe it ſeems unlikely that All our makers of Almanacks *could* be deceived in a thing of that nature, or that they *would* conſpire to miſs-lead the whole Nation, without any advantage to themſelves. You therefore deſire to know my minde concerning this Controverſie, and that ſo fully and cleerly expreſſed, as that it may enable you to eſcape undeceived by their ſeeming Reaſons.

To ſatisfie your deſire; In the firſt place, I anſwer, that, *In England, for this year* 1664, *Eaſter ought to be kept upon the tenth of April.* And that, becauſe no other day is deſigned by thoſe *old Rules* which hitherto *England*

hath alwayes followed: and our Superiours have not yet ſubſtituted *New Rules*, commanding us to uſe them in the place of the *Old* ones. Witneſs the *Book of Common-Prayer* printed in Folio at *London* 1662: Wherein the ſecond Page, before the beginning of Morning-Prayer, hath *A Table to finde Eaſter for ever.* Which Table had been often printed in the former Common-Prayer-Books; and by being re-printed, in the Edition of 1662, did ſufficiently ſhew that the Church of *England* had made no alteration for the time of celebrating *Eaſter*. That Tables title promiſeth to ſhew Eaſter *for ever*, onely in oppoſition to the *Table of Moveable Feaſts* in the fore-going Page, which teacheth to finde Eaſter *for forty years onely*: ſo that after the year 1700, it will be almoſt uſeleſs. Yet that *Table of forty years* will alwayes afford *forty* examples of *Eaſter* found by the following Table and by the Precept under it. If, for exerciſe, you ſeek all thoſe *forty Eaſters* by the *leſſer* Table, you ſhall finde no other dayes then thoſe that are ſet down in the *greater* Table, in the column whoſe title is *Eaſter-day*. The aforeſaid Book of Common-Prayer hath *two other* old Touch-ſtones, by which the *forty years Table* may be tried; and (whatſoever others tell you) the forty Eaſters of that Table will endure *all thoſe three* trials: and no difference will be found in them, if the Examiner have as much skill or ſagacity, as that *Book* requireth

requireth in thoſe that look after higher rules, and will not be content with the loweſt and eaſieſt ſort of Precepts. The *forty years Table* is fitted for mean underſtandings: But if men will queſtion the truth of that Table, or the firmneſs of the grounds of its calculation, let them not blame that Book, becauſe, for the ſatisfaction of their curioſity, it hath not other rules delivered in words ſollicitouſly weighed and conſidered, leſt ought ſhould be ſuperfluous, deficient or ambiguous. If the High way be open, ſtraight, plain, firm and ſafe; they that will run out of it, ſhould not blame the Surveyors, if all the declivities and brinks of Rivers be not fenced with Guardefous.

To come nearer to your Controverſie. All the Engliſh Almanacks place *Eaſter* upon *April* the *tenth*, this year. The Book of Common-Prayer, in its *forty years Table*, tells you that in 1664. *Eaſter-day* is *April* the *tenth*; yet ſome of your acquaintance ſay, We ought to keep it *ſooner*. How much *ſooner*? *Ten dayes* (ſay ſome, who know no difference between fixed and moveable Feaſts) *France keeps Chriſtmaſs ten dayes before us in England, therefore it keeps Eaſter ſo too.* But if you meet with any ſuch, tell them, That if the *French* keep Eaſter *ten days* before us, they muſt keep it on a *Thurſday*. The difference of Old and New Stile was introduced by skipping over *ten dayes of the Moneth* of *October* 1582; but keeping the names of the *Week-dayes* unchanged. And therefore both Stiles [calling

the ſame day Sunday, and keeping Eaſter upon Sunday] muſt needs differ *a juſt number of weeks*, or not at all. Of the fourſcore Eaſters kept ſince 1583, 36 differed not at all; 26 Roman Eaſters were a week before Ours, 5 were 4 weeks before ours, and 13 were 5 weeks before thoſe that were obſerved in *England*: as ſhall be particularly ſhewn hereafter, if need be. In all Roman-Catholick Countreys, except *Valeſia*, Eaſter-day will be kept upon their *April* 13., which we call *Apr.* 3, and ſo a week before us, this year 1664. But in the reſt of Chriſtendome, *Holland* and *Zealand* excepted, this year, *the tenth of April* will be obſerved for an Eaſter-day, even in the remoteſt parts of *Aſia* and *Africa*. Becauſe they, as well as we, finde Eaſter-day by the Rules which were generally received by all Chriſtians *Eleven hundred and thirty two years* ago, and were obſerved by all Chriſtians ever ſince, till the year of our Lord 1583: when, in obedience to a Bull of Pope *Gregory* the Thirteenth, many Countries celebrated Eaſter, a *fortnight ſooner* then the reſt of Chriſtendome. And ever ſince that year they have followed new Rules for the finding of Eaſter-day. Which Rules, 773 years hence, will give them an Eaſter-day ſix weeks before Ours: but, till then, none more then *five* weeks before us, as it was in 1663.

Weeks	*Eaſters.*
0	36
1	26
4	5
5	13
Summe	80

But I need not ſpeak any more of that Kalendar, and its new Rules, at this time; although you tell me that

that divers Roman Catholicks and Prieſts are eager pleaders for the third of *April*. I perceive that they pretend not to prove their Aſſertion, by ſaying *It is ſo in the Roman Kalendar*; For they know, that Kalendar is not yet publickly received in *England*. But they ſay "*It muſt be ſo*; becauſe in the Common-Prayer-"Book printed 1662 there is this Rule,

Eaſter-day is alwayes the firſt Sunday after the firſt full Moon, which happens next after the one and twentieth day of March.

"But, ſay they, this year, that *full Moon* is on the one "and thirtieth of *March* [a Thurſday;] after which, "the *firſt* Sunday is the *third* of *April*; the *ſecond* Sun-"day is the *tenth* of *April*. Therefore, according to this "Rule, not *April* the *tenth*, but *April* the *third* muſt be "Eaſter-day. This were a ſufficient demonſtration, if the words *full Moon* had the ſame meaning in both places. But the FULL MOON meant in the Rule, this year, is no other then the *fourth of April*: Which being Munday, the firſt Sunday after it muſt needs be *April* 10, which, therefore, by this Rule, ſhall be Eaſter. If the Prieſts you write of, make difficulty to admit ſuch *full Moons*, pray them to ſearch their Grandfathers Libraries, till they have found the *Maſs-book* which was printed by *Kingſton* and *Sutton*, in *Quarto*, at *London*, in 1555, which was the ſecond year of Queen *Mary*. The Title of the Book is, *Miſſale ad uſum Eccleſiæ*

ſiæ Sariſburienſis. The Title of the ſecond page is, *Extracta ex compoto.* (*computo* they would have ſaid.) It contains no ſuch Table of moveable Feaſts readily calculated, as our Liturgies are wont to have; but inſtead of it, there are Rules for finding the Dominical Letters, the Leap-years, the Moveable Feaſts, the New Moons and Eaſter. Eaſter-day is there found by New or Full Moons, with theſe directions,

Carmina docentia per novilunia invenire Paſcha.
Poſt regum feſta, quære novilunia trina
Poſt dominica tertia, Paſcha ſacrum celebra.

Aliud. *Poſt veris Æquinoctium Quære plenilunium:*
Et Dominica proxima ſacrum celebra Paſcha
Non verius invenies, Si mille legas codices.

The *New* Moon meant in thoſe verſes is not ſuch as our Almanacks now profeſs to give us, namely the hour and minute of the *true* Conjunction of the Sun and Moon. But it is onely the day of the Moons *mean* Conjunction, as it was above 1300 years ago; and is there found, meerly by taking the day againſt which the propoſed years Golden Number ſtands in the margin of each month. For that Computiſt knew well enough that that day would be four days after the New Moon of his own time; and therefore bids us begin at the day ſo found, and tell upwards a ſyllable to each day, ſaying *In Cœlis eſt hic*; The ſyllable *hic* will fall four days above your Golden Num-

ber

ber, and there ſhew you the day of New Moon for your time.

The *full* Moons meant in the ſame Verſes are not ſo much as preciſe *days* of mean oppoſition of Sun and Moon, but are to be found in this plain manner. To the day of that ancient New Moon found by the Golden Number, add 13: So have you the 14th day of that Eccleſiaſtical Cyclic month; Which day *Victorius* (who flouriſhed 1200 years ago) did call the *Full Moon*, and a great many others, after him, called it ſo.

If you have not that *Miſſale*, you may try its rules in any other Book that hath the golden numbers ſet in the margin of each month, like that Miſſal; (as if 3 ſtand againſt the firſt of *March*, and 13 againſt the laſt of *December*.) Such were *Henry* the *Eight's Bible* printed 1540; *Edward* the *Sixth's Common-prayer-Book*, printed 1552; (for that of 1549 had no manner of direction to finde moveable Feaſts) *Orarium ſeu libellus precationum*, publiſhed by Queen *Elizabeth*, 1560. I cannot tell you when the Golden numbers were firſt put up 4 days higher, to ſave men the labour of uſing *In cœlis eſt hic*. I finde them ſo high in the *Common prayer* Book printed at *Edinburg* 1637; as alſo in the great *Church-Bible* printed at *London* 1640. But in the *Common prayer Book* printed in folio 1662, thoſe Golden numbers are reſtored to the places which they had in King *Henry's* Bible, King *Edward's* Liturgy, Queen *Mary's* Miſſal, and Queen *Elizabeth's Ora-*

rium.

rium, except ſome few faults. But you will finde no Rubrick to tell you to what end they were ſet there. I will therefore here tell you ſome uſe of them.

The Golden Number of any year, ſet to ſome day between *March* 7 and *Aprill* 6, ſhews that day to be the Eccleſiaſtical beginning of that year. For when the Emperour *Conſtantine* had ſet an end to the cruel perſecutions of the Chriſtians, and had called that great *Council* of *Biſhops* to *Nicæa* in *Bithynia*; They (abhorring thoſe outrageous quarrels, and ſhameful diſagreements which had been among Chriſtians concerning the time of keeping Eaſter) did decree that thenceforth All Chriſtians ſhould, in remembrance of our Saviours Reſurrection, celebrate Eaſter upon the firſt Sunday after the fourteenth day of the firſt month: becauſe the holy Scriptures bear witneſs, that our Lord did ariſe upon the firſt Sunday after the Jews Paſs-over: And that their Paſs-over Lamb was to be killed and eaten on the fourteenth day of the firſt month; which months were *Lunar*, and always began with the New Moons. The Aſtronomical ſpring, that is, the Vernal Æquinoctial, fell always before the middle of their *firſt* month *Niſan*. (For, the month, whoſe middle fell before the Vernal Equinox, they accounted the *laſt* month of the preceding year) But becauſe this Decree would be ill obſerved, if all men were left to their little skill in the courſes of the Sun and Moon, the Fathers of that Council referred the whole buſineſs

to the Church of *Alexandria*; wherein at that time were more and better Aſtronomers, than in any other part of the world. Yet the reſt of Chriſtendom grew weary of depending upon *Alexandria*, and yearly expecting Letters from thence, to tell them when they were to begin their *Lent*, and to celebrate *Eaſter*. Which Letters often miſ-carrying, men grew impatient, and offered at ſeveral rules to enable men to find *Eaſter* day according to the *Nicene* Decree, without the help of *Alexandria*. But none had the hap to be generally liked, till one *Dionyſius Exiguus*, in the time of the Emperor *Juſtinian*, fitted them with a Cycle of 532. years, which received univerſal approbation, and in ſhort time, was every where received; and is in uſe in *England* at this day.

The grounds of this Cycle are theſe. *March* 21. was then accounted the day of the Vernal Equinox. If this be the earlieſt fourteenth day of the month, then *March* 8. muſt be the earlieſt New Moon that can be admitted for a Firſt month, or a beginner of the Eccleſiaſtical year. The next years *Firſt* month will begin *March* 27. and ſo forth in this order,

March. 8.	27.	16.	*Ap.* 4.	*March.* 23.	12.	31.	20.	9.	28.	17.	*Ap.* 5.	*March* 25.	14.	*Ap.* 2.	*March.* 22.	11.	*March.* 30.	19.

and then *March* 8. again as at the firſt; The Moons returning after 19. years, as the Greeks

had been taught long before they were Christians.

I have not now time to tell you why these 19. several beginnings of the *First* month were not reckoned in this Order; for they accounted that year, the first of the Cycle, whose New Moon fell upon *March* 23. so that *March* the 8. begins the 16. year; and accordingly, in *March* and *April*, the New Edition of the Liturgy in Folio hath a Red 16. standing against *March* 8. and 17. against *March* 27. &c. Whence it is easie to draw such a Table as this,

Golden Number.	16.	5.	13.	2.	10.	18.	7.	15.	4.	12.	1.	9.	17.	6.	14.	3.	11.	19.
First day	*Mar.*	8.	9.	11.	12.	14.	16.	17.	19.	20.	22.	23.	25.	27.	28.	30.	31	*Ap.* 2.
14. *day*	*Mar.*	21.	22.	24.	25.	27.	29.	30.	*Ap.* 1.	2.	4.	5.	7.	9.	10.	12.	13	15.

And thus we have found the 19. Easter limits. *Terminus Paschalis*, saith *Scaliger*, *est quarta decima Luna mensis Paschalis Christiani seculo Constantini Magni.* It is so called, because, as *November* 26. is always the limit for *Advent*, upon which day *Advent Sunday* never falls, but as soon after as may be; so every year hath a different limit for *Easter*, upon which limit *Easter* must not be kept, though it be Sunday; but on the first Sunday after the limit. As this year 1664. the Golden Number is 12. and therefore by the foregoing Table, this years *Easter* limit is *April* 4. which being Munday the next Sunday after must needs be *April* 10.

And that muſt be *Eaſter* day this year 1664. If you would ſeek it by the *Table* which teacheth *to find Eaſter for ever*, you muſt enter it with the Golden number 12. and the Sunday letter B (for the other letter C ſhews not Sunday after *Matthias* day) you will find *April* 10. as before.

So that the *Eaſter* day of 1664. is found to be the tenth of *April* by all the four ways of finding, taught in the Common-Prayer-Book; namely, The *Red* numbers in the Kalendar; The *Rule* next after the end of the Kalendar; The *Table* for forty years; And the *Table* to find *Eaſter* for ever.

If you doubt of the ſenſe or truth of what I have here haſtily written, let your next Letter tell me what it is you ſtick at, I ſhall endeavour to remove it, as being

Sir Your, &c.